THE EVOLUTION OF COMFORT

SEA RAY’S 330 OVERFLOWS WITH LUXURY IN A PEPPY CRUISER

SAFETY FIRST
10 FEATURES DESIGNED TO MAKE YOUR BOAT BETTER

DOUBLE THE FUN
CHARTERING A NEW POWERCAT IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Tested
REGAL 2750
CHRIS-CRAFT 29
FORMULA 31PC
LEGACY 32
BERTRAM 410
RIVIERA 4700

CATCHING POKER RUN FEVER ON A NEW BAJA
During the last 8 years, I’ve run a number of Sea Rays for this magazine and other marine publications. Each time I’m confronted by a juxtaposition of predictability and surprise. I basically know that I’ll be testing a solid performer packed with all the creature comforts. However, I’m always surprised that with each new model the builder incorporates design elements and features that leave you saying, “What a great idea, why hasn’t anyone thought of that before?” The new 330 Sundancer, which fills the gap between the 310 and the 340 vacated by the now discontinued 320, presented me with this same winning equation and gave cause to repeat this phrase on several occasions.

One of the areas that I predicted was going to be well-executed was the helm and surrounding area. In my opinion, Sea Ray builds some of the most comfortable and functional helms in the industry. For example, on the 330 the gauges were easily viewed either sitting or standing. The Mercury electronic DTS controls were placed perfectly for a natural orientation with the helmsman. These controls shift effortlessly and if you’re concerned about your controls being at the mercy of wiring versus the good old days of cable, fear not. The DTS controls incorporate several different sets of redundant wiring in case there is an issue.

Driving the 330, either seated or leaning back in the double flip-up bolster, is an extremely comfortable endeavor. A foot rest is angled for added comfort and there are sufficient drink holders and storage cubicles for cell phones, binoculars, cruising

The transom bench seat creates yet another place to relax on the 330.
SURPRISE
Abaft the saloon settee is the mid-cabin that converts to a double stateroom. guides, and all the other paraphernalia that collects on board a cruising yacht.

The surface for the electronics easily absorbs the optional Raymarine radar/chartplotter combination unit. I also like the fact that Sea Ray placed the VHF and the remote for the spotlight outboard of the helmsman. If you’re trying to hail a dockmaster for a transient slip your mate can make the arrangements while you maneuver in close quarters without a VHF cord wrapping around your neck from the other side.

Adjacent to the helm on the port side is a single pedestal helm seat facing forward. Personally I like this arrangement versus the inboard-facing straight settees found on other express models, including some Sea Rays. The more natural orientation while running is to face forward. Your crew can not only enjoy the sights, but can help keep a lookout as well. The chair can turn on the pedestal when you’re in entertainment mode to join the party.

Sea Ray maximizes the interior accommodations, thus negating much in the way of side decks. So access to the bow is made safe and easy through a front opening windshield flanked by a sturdy and high hand rail.

Abaft the portside helm seat is the wet bar that includes an optional Norcold refrigerator/ice maker, an optional Kenyon electric grill, space for a trash bin, and a sink. Am I the only one who has never found a use for a wet bar sink? Although you can make the point that this wet bar is more of an outdoor galley. This double-duty capability is increased when you consider there is a plush dinette on the opposite side complete with a teak table or level of comfort and ease of use.

Also in the transom is a single locker door which accesses all the typical receptacles you usually find scattered around a boat. Both of the 30-amp service plug-ins (one is for the a/c), a freshwater outlet and inlet, and the phone and cable-TV receptacle are nicely concealed behind the door. This is not only convenient, but it avoids having to run cords and hoses through the cockpit, while creating a crisp, uncluttered design. A hot and cold shower is just beyond the transom gate and easily accessible from the swim platform.

Another item which generated the “Why didn’t anybody think of that before?” catch phrase was the fuel tank deck fills. There are two tanks, located on the port and starboard sides. However, Sea Ray has incorporated fills for each tank on either side. As a result you can fill both tanks from either port or starboard. I can’t count the number of times I’ve had to pull a fuel hose across the cockpit or bow like a game of tug-of-war, while dragging dirt and grime across the boat. We’ve all suffered silently during this process. It’s these small touches on a Sea Ray that when added up, result in a superior level of comfort and ease of use.

Belowdecks, another one of these touches on the 330 is the large windows in the hull sides. Combined with overhead hatches the typical dark and dreary interior of an express cruiser is replaced by light and refreshing living quarters. While designing the settee in the saloon area, it is evident accessed from the swim platform and folds down easily. There are drink holders and a pair of Alpine speakers mounted into the stern. It’s a great place to hang out and relax while kids and friends frolic around in the water of your favorite anchorage. There is still room to stow lines and fenders in this area.

While designing
that the engineers took into account the human body and decided not to pen the curved settee we see so often today. These may look appealing at a boat show, but if you want to lie back and watch the game, forget about it. And watching the game will not be an issue on the 330. In addition to the standard 26-inch flat-screen in the saloon, there are optional sets available in the aft mid-cabin, and a flip-down unit above the master berth. Our test boat featured an adjustable Posturpedic mattress and backrest for the master berth. The mid-cabin can serve as a second saloon or entertainment area and converts to a double.

Don’t think the 330 is all about creature comforts and short on performance. This peppy cruiser has some get-up-and-go and is a sure-footed performer. Sea Ray’s Gary McCloud and I had the opportunity to compare two 330s: One was equipped with twin 375 hp Mercruiser 496 Magnums with Bravo Three sterndrives and the other featured twin 370 hp Mercruiser 8.1 S Horizons coupled to V-drives. With the stern-drives, we achieved a top speed of 41.9 knots, while burning a total of 66 gallons per hour. At 3600 rpm, we achieved 30 knots while burning a total of 33.4 gallons per hour.

With the V-drives our top speed was 35.7 knots with a total fuel burn rate of 64.5 gallons per hour. At 3900 rpm we cruised at 30 knots, burning a total of 42.4 gallons per hour. This is almost 10 gallons more an hour than the stern drive model at comparable speeds.

Sea Ray offers several engine options including diesel sterndrives using the 301 hp Yanmar 6LPA-STZP. In my opinion, this could be a very interesting option and we hope to test this package once it’s available.

Somebody recently asked me if it was difficult to write boat tests for a company like Sea Ray that is constantly coming out with new models. The response was simple. Since they’re always sprinkling each new model with innovation and clever touches, it never gets boring. If you’re looking for a mid-size cruiser, I suggest you check out the peppy 330. For more information contact, Sea Ray Boats, www.searay.com.